

MEETING MINUTES / 15 NOVEMBER 2016

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Farley, Showell, Armbruster, Baldwin, Bradley, Lardizzone, Newman, Newstadt, and Smith **60%**

Absences: Carroll, Coons, Hampton, McMullen, Sarg, and Seppala

Guests: Pat Cerchio-Vieira (First State Women Warriors), Vivian Starnes (DAV Auxiliary), Dave Strawbridge (Delaware Tech), Carlos Robinson (Veterans Experience), Vince Kane (Wilmington VAMC), Jack Tillman

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS:

Showell:

Informed members that Chairman Farley is attending a Governor's meeting and he was at the White House yesterday regarding Delaware's Ending Homeless Veterans Initiative

Reminded everyone about briefing time limits, 15 minutes for recurring speakers and 5 minutes for guest speakers

MEETING MINUTES:

Commissioner Lardizzone made the motion and Commissioner Newstadt seconded for approval.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

Wilmington VAMC – Robert Callahan, Acting Director

Proud that Homeless Veterans have resources in place to combat homelessness

- Congratulations to those throughout Delaware who have helped this process

The Hepatitis C clinic has been busy

- Recent newspaper article highlighted the disease's increase

- Wilmington VAMC's clinic tests for disease

- Nationally \$5M has been spent to address the disease

- Working to determine who can be treated

Direct scheduling is in place for the audiology and optometry clinics (instead of using call center)

Stat care (highest level of care) has been instituted

- Earlier this year 38 Veterans were in this status, now only one remains

- There is an emphasis on seeing Veterans in a more timely manner

Behavioral Health Access

- Earlier this year 411 Veterans have appointments greater than 30 days (making them Choice eligible)

- Currently 329 Veterans have appointments greater than 30 day

Primary Care and Mental Health Clinics are beginning same day services (if the Veteran's need is verified)

- Plan to be in place by the end of the year

(Bradley) If a Veteran is not in the VA system, can they be tested for Hepatitis C?

They must be enrolled in the system to be tested. If they are not enrolled, the VA will find out if they are eligible for enrollment

(Smith) Can you expand dental treatment?

Dental care is restrictive and the eligibility rules come from Congress, so it is difficult to change

More staff is being added for patient scheduling and for drawing blood (lab)

More physicians will be placed in Emergency Services to assist with assessments/treatment

Working to secure a vascular surgery contract that will provide orthopedic and intermediate (joint replacement) surgeries. The contract should be in place in three months

(Finan) Can you provide information about bridge (transitional) housing?

Answered by Vince Kane, Chief Operating Officer – The emphasis is on moving to permanent housing, as opposed to transitional housing. Although transitional housing is the bridge to permanent housing, more monies are being used toward permanent housing. Grant per diem is not ending but it may be reduced

Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) – Bill Peterson, Director:

118 residents

- Numbers will increase following Gold unit upgrade

Completed both surveys (inspections), the VA and State

- Minor findings for both

Gold unit bath suite

- Selecting correct tubs for unit

The kitchen experienced a minor fire

- Ceiling received damage

- Damage costs \$1200

- Original ceiling did not meet code, now it does after repairs

(Baldwin) What is the status of the lift for the dental suite?

Waiting for life selection information from Maryland's Veteran Affairs

(Baldwin) Our organization is interested in funding the lift, as a reminder the lift raises wheelchairs to assist with dental treatment

Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:

Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program will not be renewed each year. This is significant because Home of the Brave will now compete for monies to fund their male facility

- VISN 4 will rank shelters, then submit for funding

(Newstadt) What funds does Home of the Brave receive?

Grant and Aid from Delaware (\$10K)

VA fund per diem (based on males occupying beds/\$230 – 240K annually)

Strictly donations for female facility

Delaware Tech started paving the walkway with commemorative bricks

- Bricks costs \$100 and recognize people and organizations

The team installed a swing set and flower bed

DOL – Veteran Employment and Training Service, State Director, Dave Rich,

Not present

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Joe Rodriguez, Commander Delaware Veterans Post 1

Thanked the Commission for their continuous support of Veterans

Explained that Post 1 has assisted Veterans through various means (i.e. fundraisers, information, etc.)

- Donated \$100K toward Veteran causes in the last five years

Been a part of the Commission since its inception

- Sad to no longer be a part (due to current Commission's position change to an At-Large position)

(Showell) For clarification, At-Large members serve in an official capacity within the Commission

(Newstadt) You can still discuss your organization's focus during Commission meetings

(Smith) Does not believe the Delaware Veterans' position should be transitioning to an At-Large position

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Armbruster:

Interments - 78

Five individuals interviewed for the Maintenance Supervisor position

Five individuals were scheduled to interview for the Seasonal Casual (admin) position but none showed

- The Cemetery Administrator would like this to become a full-time position based on the increased workload

****This has been discussed with Director Kirby and brought to the Department of State's attention****

- Maybe the Commission can work a partnership with a local university to help fill the position with interns/volunteers

Cemetery Administrator is seeking permission to move donated plaques/trees as they deteriorate or block expansion

- The University of Delaware's Beautification Team has a concept to place those items in a place of honor (Newstadt/Lardizzone) Movement of the items is a political issues that has been debated for some time

****Director Kirby has sought guidance from the Deputy Secretary of State on this issue****

Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Bradley:

Interments - 30

Commissioner Bradley introduced himself as the new POC

Delivered American Veteran flags to the cemetery for delivery to the Bear cemetery

Health and Human Services, Commissioner:

Nothing to report

Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen

Please review the recommended legislative items and provide comments/recommendations by the December meeting

Commemorative Affairs, Commissioner Showell

The ceremony host list will be updated

(Kirby) The new list will only go out three years and will be reviewed/updated each December to confirm availability

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:

Commissioner McMullen (AFSA)

Completed an Adopt A Highway project cleaning a Kent County roadway

Visited Delaware Veterans Home interfacing with residents and working projects

18 October - Attended Governor's Volunteer Award Dinner to see Liz Byers-Jiron receive her award

22 October – Briefed Dover AFB Retiree Day on Commission functions

Commissioner Armbruster (AL)

National Commander's Delaware visit is 15 – 17 March

State Commander visited Reno (NV) to review 2017 national convention site

Commissioner Bradley (AMVETS)

Visited the Vietnam Veterans Wall in Washington DC

Post 2 held a Vietnam Veterans Ceremony

Post 2 Auxiliary visited the Home of the Brave to help residents

Commissioner Smith (DELVETS)

Attended Delaware Order of Police Veterans Day event

Attended Victory Village ribbon cutting event
Attended Wilmington VAMC POW/MIA Dedication ceremony

Commissioner Lardizzone (DAV)
Veteran Service Officers have received a status reclassification (upgrade)
Attended the CHEER Center Veterans Dinner
Attended the Department of State's budget hearing
Informed that the Secretary of State will provide \$40K toward a World War I memorial. Will meet with Sipple and Sons for draft plans

Commissioner Coons (KWVA)
Not present

Commissioner Farley (MCL)
14 November - Visited White House for national summit on Veteran Homelessness
- Spoke to audience about Delaware's program
- Met First Lady Obama and Dr. Biden
15 November – Attended Task Force on Firearm Suicide Prevention hosted by Governor Markell

Chairman Sarg (MOAA)
Not present

Commissioner Carroll (MOPH)
Not present

Commissioner Seppala (MOWW)
Not present

Commissioner Newman (VFW)
Attended Eastern State Conference
Projected to visit National Home for Children from 3 – 5 December
Visited Wilmington VAMC interfacing with residents
Camden Post meeting provided information supporting medical cannabis. Veteran provided the data and Senator Ennis may support a bill

Commissioner Baldwin (VVA)
Marine Corps Ball is scheduled to be held at the First State Military Academy
Will visit the Rodel Foundation of Delaware to solicit Trust Fund donations

Commissioner Newstadt (At Large)
Jewish War Veterans had a professional speaker present on dementia and its affects
Ten Jewish War Veterans attended the Bridge Ceremony
Assisted the Faulk Road Cemetery in replacing American flags

Commissioner Showell (At Large)
Attended the Welcome Home Ceremony for the Delaware National Guard

21 November – Attended Wilmington VAMC meeting for caregivers, discussed Veteran support with mental health issues (emphasized medication use/monitoring)

Delaware National Guard Holiday Concerts are 7 December (Grand Opera House) and 8 December (Rollins Center)

Commissioner Hampton (At Large)

Not present

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

DVTF: Requests 9, Granted 6 (66%), Awarded \$6904.61 and Balance \$55,700.00

TERM EXPIRATION:

Hampton 22 February 2017

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Veterans Day Parade (CLOSED)

By-Law Review (CLOSED)

Commission met in closed session following meeting and approved recommended By-Law Committee changes.

By-Laws will be updated and forwarded for review/signature

NEW BUSINESS:

World War I Memorial

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION:

Holiday Party will follow the December meeting at Delaware Veterans Post 2

(Newstadt) Working with Wilmington VAMC to resolve issue of county ambulances transporting Veterans to the correct Emergency Room

(Baldwin) Discussed a case where a Veteran received an ambulance bill from transport from a house fire

Commissioners were asked to join a Commission Committee

SPECIAL SESSION:

Commission met and approved recommended By-Law changes (see Unfinished Business above)

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, 20 December 2016 at 10:00 AM

LOCATION:

Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs